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TIGHTER POLITICAL CONTROL STRESSED AT THE
EAST GERMAN PEASANT PARTY CONGRESS



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TIGHTER POLITICAL CONTROL STRESSED AT THE
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At the 7th Peasant Party Congress held in Magdeburg in March 1962, Walter Ulbricht, First Secretary of the SED Central Committee, stated that the foremost task of the congress was the discussion and adoption of a program for the continued consolidation and profitableness of the collective farms (LPG's). Although Ulbricht lauded the model LPG's, stating that 50 percent of the 6,378 LPG's of the advanced type are already operating at a profit, he reminded the congress of the need to increase political activity in the less efficient LPG's. 1/

Ulbricht made only a passing reference to the growth of agricultural output during the past 10 years but admitted that serious losses in potatoes, grains, and sugar beets had occurred in East Germany during 1961. Part of this failing was attributed to weather, but Ulbricht made it clear that the Party believed that a greater share of the decline could be traced to the inefficient organization of the LPG's and to the Party inactivity in the rural areas. He added that both shortcomings must be eliminated.

Coming on the heels of Khrushchev's Plenum speech at the 22nd Congress of the Communist Party of the USSR, it was not unexpected that organization proposals made at the Peasant Party Congress would parrot the reforms promoted by Khrushchev. Ulbricht suggested needed changes in the LPG statutes and in the functions of the Ministry of Agriculture, taking a cue from Khrushchev, who stated that a reexamination of the outmoded statutes of the collective farms is needed in the USSR.

Ulbricht implied further that no LPG must be permitted to exist at the expense of the people, and he criticized the use of state funds for the support of inefficient collectives. Bonuses and premiums paid for livestock products and the overfulfillment of planned contracts, moreover, will be curtailed, and a new set of prices, based on the unconditional increase in labor productivity and a reduction of production cost, will be introduced gradually.

Noting also that the economic gains from the production of livestock products in the lower type of LPG's were considerably greater than the gains from field crops and that the profit from such sales accrued to the collective members rather than to the collective itself, Ulbricht

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endorsed organizational changes that would reduce the importance of the private plot and would raise the share of the funds accruing to the LPG's. 2/

A more sweeping organizational recommendation that would tighten Party control over the LPG's was implied by Gerhard Grueneberg, Party secretary for agricultural matters. Grueneberg in a concluding speech to the congress alluded to the added responsibility of the Party First Secretary of the Kreis executive board on agricultural policy matters for supervising more closely the agricultural activity in his area. 3/ A similar role has been given to the First Party Secretaries in the respective administrative districts of the USSR.

Grueneberg added that the qualified academically trained agricultural personnel should be shifted out of administrative work and placed in LPG's. A twofold purpose accomplished by this movement would be to use trained manpower as instructors and as Party representatives in the rural areas.

The proposals by Ulbricht and Grueneberg suggest that priority be given to accelerating and consolidating Party control over the rural elements. No references in either speech attributed the failure of farm policy to material shortages, peasant indifference, and low farm wages. More criticism was directed toward the inefficient use of resources, the failure to use the scientific and technical advances developed during the past years, and the neglect of farm educational work, all of which fall within the province of management.

Political thought thus continues to dominate East German agricultural policy and accounts for Ulbricht's paramount reliance on organizational reforms to raise agricultural output. It is apparent that Ulbricht is not being pressured to introduce economic incentives in his farm policy. A holding position seems to be more acceptable, particularly if any extension of resources means a cutback in the material supplies for industry. Organizational reforms in past years, however, have had little influence on the total agricultural output, and there is no reason to believe that a further refinement of political control will produce significantly better results in 1962.

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